

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5661
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS., CZ
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 0227

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, PINT, PORT, UY
SUBJ: GENERAL ALVAREZ' CONFIDANTE OUTLINES OBJECTIVES OF
NEW GOVERNMENTAL LEADERSHIP

REF: A) MONTEVIDEO 210 (NOTAL) (DTG 191101Z78)
B) 77 MONTEVIDEO 5637 (NOTAL) (DTG 061718Z DEC 77)
C) MONTEVIDEO 135 (NOTAL) (DTG 141140Z JAN 78)

1. SUMMARY. DURING THE PAST WEEK, THE ALVAREZ
CAMP TOOK THE INITIATIVE AND CAME FORWARD FOR SUB-
STANTIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH US. THESE DISCUSSIONS
REVEAL A THOROUGH AND POSITIVE PLAN ON THEIR PART
TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, RESTORE SOME
DEMOCRATIC FORMS, AND IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE
USG. WE ARE SATISFIED THAT THE INTERMEDIARY, AN AIR
FORCE COLONEL, IS ACCURATELY REFLECTING THE APPROACH
AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ALVAREZ GROUP, WHICH WE FIND TO
BE INCOURAGING FROM THE POINT OF USG INTERESTS.
HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT AT ALL SURE OF THE ABILITY
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OF THE ALVAREZ GROUP TO IMPLEMENT THIS VERY
AMBITIOUS PROGRAM IN THE FACE OF CERTAIN OPPOSITION
FROM THE FAR RIGHT AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, FROM
POWERFUL ELEMENTS IN THE MILITARY.
THE PALADINI INITIATIVE TO BREAK THE IMPASSE ON THE IAHRC
(REFTEL C) MAY BE A FIRST TEST OF THEIR ABILITY TO DO THIS,
EVEN THOUGH GENERAL ALVAREZ AND HIS MEN ARE NOT YET IN PLACE.

END SUMMARY.

2. THROUGHT AIR ATTACHE, AIR FORCE COLONEL JORGE MARTINEZ (CLOSELY LINKED TO GENERAL ALVAREZ AND SECRETARY OF THE ALVAREZ-HEADED ARMED FORCES POLITICAL COMMISSION) REQUESTED MEETING WITH POLOFF TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON POLITICAL SITUATION. DURING TWO LENGTHY RESULTANT CONVERSATIONS DURING PAST WEEK, MARTINEZ ("SPEAKING UNOFFICIALLY, BUT REFLECTING SUPERIORS' VIEWS"), ATTRIBUTED FOLLOWING POSITIONS TO INCOMING ARMY CINC ALVAREZ AND ALLIES:

A. OBJECTIVES. FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE NEW LEADERSHIP INTENDS TO RESTORE THE SERIOUSLY DETERIORATED MILITARY COMMAND STRUCTURE, AND BRING UNDER CONTROL THE NEGATIVE ACTIONS (HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, CORRUPTION, ETC) OF ISOLATED INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS. AN INITIAL STEP IN THIS DIRECTION WILL BE TAKEN ON FEBRUARY 2, WHEN ALVAREZ AND BRIGADIER BENDAHAN (INCOMING AIRFORCE CINC) WILL DELIVER A STERN WARNING TO NAVY CINC MARQUEZ TO CONTROL BOTH HIS TONGUE AND THE FUSILLEROS NAVALES (A NAVAL GROUND FORCE UNIT NOTORIOUS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES). OTHER OBJECTIVES, FOR WHICH NO SPECIFIC PRIORITIES HAVE OR CAN YET BE ESTABLISHED, (MANY CAN BE ACHIEVED CONCURRENTLY), INCLUDE: (1) RESTORE FREEDOM OF CONFIDENTIAL

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SPEECH; (2) RESTORE FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY; (3) RESTORE FREEDOM TO NON-COMMUNIST PRESS; (4) REINSTITUTE HABEAS CORPUS; (5) REINSTITUTE RANGE OF NOW-SUSPENDED MEASURES OF INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION IN JUDICIAL PROCESSES; AND (6) EASE UP ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE TO BRING ABOUT AN IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING STANDARDS FOR THE LOWER AND MIDDLE CLASSES. THESE MEASURES, MARTINEZ ASSERTED, ARE TO BEGIN AN OPENING OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION, AND RESTORE THE SEVERELY DIMINISHED PRESTIGE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMED FORCES.

B. NEGATIVE FORCES. DURING THE TWO CONVERSATIONS, MARTINEZ REPEATEDLY REFERRED TO EXTREME RIGHT ELEMENTS (BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN) AS THE COMMON ENEMY OF THE ALVAREZ FORCES AND THE U.S., DEDICATED TO MAINTAINING A PERMANENT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN US IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEIR OWN POWER AND POSITIONS. MARTINEZ WAS POINTED IN HIS REFERENCES TO SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND THE PRESIDENCY

(SEE REF A) WHO ARE INTENTIONALLY TWISTING INFORMATION TO EXACERBATE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. HE ALSO SINGLED OUT DISTORTED PRESS REPORTING, MANIPULATED BY THE EXTREME RIGHT, AS A NEGATIVE AND DANGEROUS ELEMENT WHICH THE NEW LEADERSHIP FULLY INTENDS TO DEAL WITH.

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C. USG-GOU RELATIONS. MARTINEZ REITERATED, DURING BOTH CONVERSATIONS, THE DESIRE OF THE ALVAREZ GROUP TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE USG TAKING OFF ON A LINE RAISED BY POLOFF, MARTINEZ EMPHASIZED THE ESSENTIALITY, IN THE PRESENT SITUATION, OF INCREASED DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GOU AND THE EMBASSY ON A SERIES OF LEVELS, IN ORDER TO AVOID CONTINUED DISTORTIONS OF OUR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS. SUCH DIALOGUE SHOULD TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE CINCS, MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL COMMISSION AND THE EMBASSY. WITH SUCH DIALOGUE, RESPECTIVE POSITIONS ON MANY MATTERS WHICH HAVE POSED SERIOUS PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS CAN BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD AND CONFRONTATIONS, WHICH ONLY FEED THE RIGHT, AVOIDED.

D. HUMAN RIGHTS. MARTINEZ INDICATED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE SPECIFIC CASE OF THE IAHRC, DISCUSSED BELOW) NEED NOT CREATE BILATERAL PROBLEMS. HE READILY ADMITTED

THAT HUMAN RIGHTS EXCESSES HAVE OCCURRED IN THE DIS-
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TANT AND RECENT PAST. HOWEVER, MARTINEZ STATED THAT THE NEW LEADERSHIP'S MEASURES ARE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO END SUCH ABUSES AND TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION ACROSS THE BOARD. THE NEW LEADERSHIP WILL WELCOME RESPONSIBLE AND REASONABLY OBJECTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS-RELATED VISITORS FROM THE U.S. AND STRIVE TO COOPERATE WITH THEM TO THE MAXIMUM, AS SUCH CONTACTS CAN ONLY BENEFIT URUGUAY.

E. INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (IAHRC). URUGUAY HAS NEVER CHALLENGED THE LEGITIMACY OF THE IAHRC, MARTINEZ CLAIMED, BUT ONLY THE IRREGULAR AND PREJUDICED MANNER IN WHICH THE COMMISSION (AND SPECIFICALLY CHAIRMAN AGUILAR) PROCEEDED IN THE URUGUAYAN CASE. IF THE IAHRC HAD FORMALLY REQUESTED A VISIT, WITH FULL COMMISSION APPROVAL, URUGUAY WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED SUCH A VISIT MONTHS AGO. ACCORDING TO MARTINEZ, THIS ISSUE HAS NOW BEEN COMPLICATED BY PERSONALITIES (AGUILAR ON THE IAHRC SIDE AND ALVARO ALVAREZ ON THE GOU SIDE), AND THE ARMED FORCES POLITICAL COMMISSION HAS APPROVED A PROPOSAL MADE BY BRIGADIER BENDAHAN TO NEGOTIATE ANY DIFFERENCES WITH THE IAHRC (NOTE: THIS IS THE PALADINI INITIATIVE MENTIONED IN MONTEVIDEO 135).

F. EMBASSY POLITICAL CONTACTS. AFTER TAKING A STRONG POSITION DURING THE INITIAL MEETING AGAINST ANY EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH "DISCREDITED" AND PROSCRIBED LEADERS OF THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES "WHO HAVE NO FUTURE POLITICAL ROLE", DURING THE SECOND MEETING MARTINEZ ADOPTED A MUCH MODERATED POSTURE, ASKING ONLY THAT THE EMBASSY AVOID PROVIDING "UNJUSTIFIED HOPE" TO THESE LEADERS.
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3. COMMENT: MARTINEZ HAS SERVED AS "POINT MAN" FOR GENERAL ALVAREZ IN THE PAST, MOST RECENTLY IN CONTACTS WITH THE BLANCO PARTY (REF B). HE HAS ALSO MAINTAINED CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY AIR ATTACHES FOR SOME YEARS. HE IS A BRIGHT, ARTICULATE, TOUGH, AMBITIOUS, AND CONSERVATIVE OFFICER WHO WAS CO-AUTHOR WITH FONMIN ROVIRA OF GOU'S MASSIVE WHITE

PAPER "SUBVERSION". HIS ROLE AS SECRETARY OF THE POLITICAL COMMISSION INCLUDES DRAFTING MOST OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORTS, ETC., AND EXTENDS BEYOND TO A MYRIAD OF OTHER TASKS INCLUDING PRODUCING ALMOST ALL SPEECHES DELIVERED BY GENERAL ALVAREZ. MARTINEZ MAY BE INSERTING SOME PERSONAL, WISHFUL THINKING INTO HIS PRESENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP, AND ITS ASSESSMENT OF THE RAPIDITY WITH WHICH IT CAN OVERCOME ULTRA-RIGHT RESISTANCE (ESPECIALLY IN THE MILITARY) AND ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT MARTINEZ IS ACCURATELY CONVEYING THE BASIC APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES OF GENERALS ALVAREZ, BENDAHAN, AND THEIR ALLIES. ALTHOUGH THERE UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE SOME FRICTIONS AND PROBLEMS WE CONSIDER THEIR APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES TO BE ENCOURAGING FROM THE STANDPOINT OF USG INTERESTS IN URUGUAY.

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